

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
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AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 10466

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, CZ
SUBJECT: THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP-STABILITY
THROUGH COLLEGIALITY

REF: PRAGUE 1520

1. AS PROPOSED IN LONDON 9381 AND APPROVED IN PRAGUE 1583 (BOTH NOTAL) WE PASSED COPY OF REFTEL ANALYSIS TO EASTERN EUROPEAN AND SOVIET DEPARTMENT OF FCO.
2. IN RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST FOR INFORMAL BRITISH COMMENTS ON REFTEL, WE HAVE RECEIVED FOLLOWING REMARKS FROM FIGGIS (ASSISTANT HEAD OF EESD):

"THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER OF 10 JUNE, AND ITS ENCLOSED TELEGRAM FROM THE US EMBASSY IN PRAGUE, ABOUT THE CURRENT POSITION OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP. WE HAVE READ THIS WITH MUCH INTEREST.

SINCE YOU ASKED FOR OUR COMMENTS, I HOPE YOU WILL
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NOT MIND MY SENDING YOU A FEW. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE TELEGRAM COMES TO THE CONCLUSION THAT HUSAK IS AS FIRMLY ENTRENCHED AS EVER AS PARTY LEADER, AND THAT CHANGES ARE UNLIKELY. IT QUOTES TWO REASONS FOR CONSIDERING THE QUESTION AT ALL - CHARTER 77 AND THE DISMISSAL OF PODGORNÝ IN THE SOVIET UNION. WHETHER OR NOT PODGORNÝ'S FALL MAY HAVE BEEN PARTLY DUE TO POLICY

DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP, IT SEEMS TO US THAT MAJOR CHANGES IN SOVIET POLICY ARE NOT TO BE EXPECTED FOLLOWING HIS POLITICAL DISAPPEARANCE. CONSEQUENTIAL CHANGES IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP CAN THEREFORE BE DISCOUNTED.

AS FAR AS CHARTER 77 IS CONCERNED, OUR VIEW IS THAT THE WHOLE OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK PARTY LEADERSHIP HAS AN INTEREST IN NEUTRALISING OR ENDING THE CHARTER 77 MOVEMENT. NONE OF THEM STANDS TO BENEFIT BY ALLOWING IT TO CONTINUE OR BY BECOMING ASSOCIATED WITH A SOFT LINE TOWARDS IT. THE RUSSIANS WOULD PRESUMABLY PREFER A CZECHOSLOVAKIA HARRIED BY WESTERN PROPAGANDA FOR TAKING A STRONG LINE WITH DISSIDENTS THAN A CZECHOSLOVAKI IN TURMOIL BUT APPLAUDED BY THE WEST. WHILE IT IS NO DOUBT TRUE THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD PREFER NOT TO FACE THE PROPAGANDA LIMELIGHT OF BELGRADE AT A TIME WHEN DRACONIAN MEASURES WERE BEING TAKEN AGAINST DISSIDENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE, THEY WOULD, I THINK, LIKE IT EVEN LESS IF BELGRADE WERE LIKELY TO COINCIDE WITH THE KIND OF SPECTACULAR MUTINY IN THE RANKS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1968. IF THIS READING OF THE SITUATION IS RIGHT THEN THE RUSSIANS COULD BE EXPECTED TO IMPRESS ON THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP THE NEED FOR STRONG HANDLING IN ORDER TO PREVENT CHARTER 77 FROM CREATING SUCH A SITUATION. I DOUBT IF ANY OF THE PRESENT CZECHOSLOVAK LEADERSHIP WOULD BE WILLING TO DEFY

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SOVIET PRESSURE OF THIS KIND. AS IT HAPPENS, OF COURSE, IT HAS NOT COME TO THAT. HUSAK HAS HANDLED CHARTER 77 QUITE SKILLFULLY AND, WHILE SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES MIGHT HAVE PREFERRED HIM TO WIELD A BIGGER STICK, THE FACT THAT HIS TACTICS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL, SO FAR AT LEAST, MUST DISARM THEIR CRITICISM. THEY CANNOT THEREFORE BE A THREAT TO HIS POSITION.

IN SUM, WE AGREE WITH THE ANALYSIS IN THE TELEGRAM YOU SENT US."

BREWSTER

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Message Attributes

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